

# Co-Creating Green

## A Strategic Public Art Vision for Lyngford Park, Taunton

for & on behalf of  
SOMERSET ART WORKS  
in partnership with North Taunton One Team

2022

Prepared by  
George Lovesmith  
architect  
artist  
lecturer  
passivhaus designer



## Contents

- 1.0 A Method  
How we shaped the vision for Lyngford Park
- 2.0 Other green spaces around Lyngford Park
- 3.0 Lyngford Park
  - 3.1 Qualities & character
  - 3.2 Selected background & historical research
- 4.0 What we did
  - 4.1 A Great Big Story Map
  - 4.2 Wild Tours
  - 4.3 Inhabitations
- 5.0 What we learnt  
A summary of barriers and opportunities
- 6.0 The Strategic Vision  
*in 2 strands:*
  - 6.1 Programme(s) of Co-Creation
  - 6.2 Playable Infrastructure
- 7.0 Identified collaborator & partnership opportunities
- 8.0 about Somerset Art Works & North Taunton One Team

## 1.0 A Method

### How we shaped the vision for Lyngford Park

Understandings of Lyngford Park and proposals for the space have been developed through a series of creative engagement activities held throughout the summer of 2022 as part of the Pride in Priorswood Family Fun Days in the park. This builds on deep rooted work over many years by Somerset Art Works with Somerset West & Taunton Council, and a range of other local partners (see below).

Intentionally not described as a consultation, the activities did *not* involve asking people directly how they would like to see the park improved. The creative focus of this work was to give every participant a voice within the project but by introducing games and sharing stories as a way of uncovering feelings and observations.

This is conceived of as a *situated* way to work:

- establishing shared meanings while in the space that are inseparable from the place
- exploring & experiencing the different areas and facilities in the park together through different art forms
- promoting marginalised voices within a practice of equality
- creatively and collectively testing different ways to enjoy the space &
- aiming to create new positive memories along the way

The Lyngford Labyrinth was realised in 2018 and 2021 by Christopher Jelley

& in 2019 & 2021 Lyngford Film has seen local young people collaborate with film makers Richard Tomlinson, Aphra Evans & Sarah Langley



## 2.0 Other green spaces around Lyngford Park



## 2.0 Other green spaces around Lyngford Park

### Taunton Green

also known as 'Tractor Park'  
or 'Wellsprings Park'

A large park with sports courts and  
play areas

People said there were issues  
with flooding & that 'it's a bit of a  
teenage hangout and is often a bit  
of a state after the weekend'



### Stoney Furlong playing fields near Lyngford Park School



### Wedlands Green Space, Grange Walk

A valuable green route near a  
primary school.

Families may not feel encouraged  
to stay and play as there are  
numerous 'no ball games' signs



Playing fields between Cleeve Road,  
Priorswood Road and Cashford  
Gate with two playing areas, one of  
which may be known as  
'The Shoulders'

## 2.0 Other green spaces around Lyngford Park

Warres Road Under 5s Play Area



Blackthorn Gardens Pocket Park

This pocket park was developed by artists Sarah Langley & Simon Ripley working with local young people and families.

This project was also led by Somerset Art Works



Land between Priorswood Rd / Hazelbrook Campus

(former ground's of St Augustine's School)

Subject to ownership / development plans this site has potential for something very ambitious. There is currently no official public access.

## 3.0 Lyngford Park

### 3.1 Qualities & Character

Lyngford Park is approx. 26,000m<sup>2</sup>.

It can be found in the **heart of Priorswood** between the busy Eastwick Road with the Priorswood Place shops to the north and Lyngford Road to the south. The quieter residential Victory Road and Woodland Road run along the western edge.

Lyngford Park is in some ways **a neighbourhood civic hub**. Priorswood Place to the north hosts the thriving local community centre and post office and along the north-eastern edge of the park a string of local amenities including the Hillside Family Centre, Brook Green Nursery and Priorswood Library look out across the grass.

**The park has two distinct characters:**

**The northern area is well equipped.** It has a central grassy area which is mowed in the summer, surrounded by a table tennis table, an outdoor gym, a play area, a youth shelter and a skate park. Well established trees line a footpath on the western edge & to the east Brook Green Nursery's outdoor learning area forms a continuation of the green space, with fruit trees planted alongside to encourage wildlife and to enable the children to experience seasonal changes and wildlife at close proximity.

**The southern stretch is wilder.** A small stream emerges from an underground culvert. It is lined by weeping willow trees and runs along the eastern edge of the park here before returning to a culvert through a sluice in the south east corner of the park. Grasses in this area are intentionally uncut to encourage wildlife and a large number of tree saplings have been planted in recent years.



## 3.2 Lyngford Park

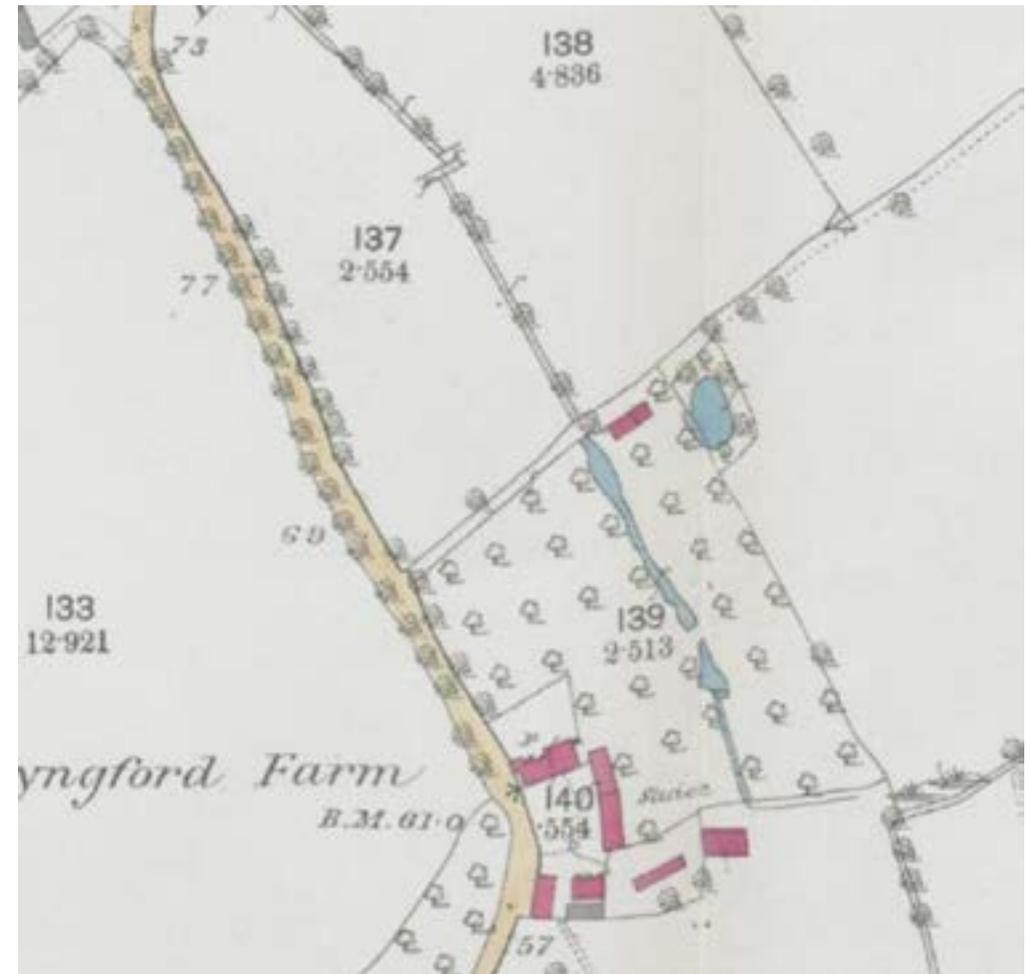
### Selected background & historical research

Back in the 1800s the area was almost all farmland.

A lane ran along where Victory Road now runs & a collection of farm buildings, called Lyngford Farm, was clustered to the south west of what is now the park. These buildings still exist today and are now homes.

The southern area of the park, which appears to be an area for wildlife, was historically a pocket of woodland in amongst the local fields.

The map also shows a pond though there are no traces of this today.



A map of the area from the period 1844-1888  
from Know Your Place kypwest.org.uk

## 4.0 What we did

### 4.1 A Great Big Story Map



On a giant map of Lyngford Park & the surrounding streets **people were asked to draw, write and collage their memories, feelings and favourite parts of the park.**

While children cut, pasted and drew, conversations with grown-ups were noted down as well.

We learnt bits about the **history** of the area:

The area was known for its post-war pre-fab housing to the west of the park which was demolished in the 70s to make way for the current bungalows.

& heard some pieces of **funny local folklore:**

“I saved a lad’s leg who had skewered it on a fence post – Over 20 years ago ...and he still has the piece of fence post! He’s a local landscaper now”



As you might expect there were many references to the **play equipment** and typical park activities of **football** and **dog walking**:

“I loved this moment when I won a football match”

“Dog walkies with dad”

“I remember cold winter mornings with a coffee while Tyler played”

“Lots has changed - The outdoor gym gets used a lot. More than I thought it would”

“I come to meet friends and play ping pong”

**The skate park is popular** with young children, even those not yet able to skate:

“I slide down the ramps on my back, like a slide, with my cousin”

“I don’t skate but I like to run and jump on the ramps”

“I like clinging to the ramps – sliding down on my tummy”

“My friend told me about skateboarding club here every Tuesday so I come with my cousin”

Many people associate the park with their journeys to **local community hubs** like the nursery, library and local churches:

“My nursery is here. I liked to do maths”

“I like to see the blue sky over the library”

“I remember joining the library. If there were activities here like at Taunton Library I’d come more often”.

A lot of people made reference to **nature** and natural features of the park:

“Climbing trees” “Conkers” “Climbing” “Sledging on the slopes”

“There was a famous and very noisy rookery here. There used to be loads of rooks until the Elms were cut down, probably when Dutch Elm disease struck. I walk in this wild area about once a week.”

**The stream is particularly prominent in people’s memories:**

“When I was learning to ride a bike I cycled into the stream – OUCH!”

“I remember jumping over the stream when we were kids, 30 years ago... but I wouldn’t let my son do that now!”

“There was a rope swing and we could swing into the stream”

“We were looking for frog spawn in the stream – there’s lot’s in there in May. Mummy was pregnant & I pushed her into the water! We laugh about it now but mummy was very cross.”



## 4.2 What we did

### Wild Tours



## 4.2 What we did

### Wild Tours

In small groups we went on wild 'walking-playing' tours around the park:

-storytelling,

-bug hunting

& getting to know some of the trees.

#### Storytelling

The weeping willows provided perfect shady enclosures where our **imagination could wander** while we recounted some remembered folk tales and share some classic favourites.

#### Bug Hunting

Some simple techniques allowed us to find more bugs than we could name and we were treated to **striking displays by dragonflies** around the stream.

#### Tree Hugging

We played a variety of games whilst getting very close-up to the trees - estimating their size & trying to spot who might be living in them gave us **a whole new perspective** on these giants.



## 4.3 What we did

### Inhabitations



## 4.3 What we did

### Inhabitations

In our final session we set out to test or model different ways we could creatively inhabit different parts of the park and ***experience the quieter, wilder areas that may often go ignored.***

Ideas largely emerged from earlier sessions, building on memories or favourite areas referred to by others and sharing them more widely.

Each activity aimed to be enjoyable and invite participants to ***be creative, and discover*** for them self.

#### Scavenger Hunting

The wilderness being cultivated in the park meant there were of natural things to find with ***an array of colours, shapes and textures to explore.***

#### Memory Games

The bounty of scavenged goodies then formed the tools for a simple memory game. Taking ***inspiration from nature for simple playful pleasures.***

#### Foraging & Picnicking

Some local people knew where to find brambles for blackberries and ***everyone enjoyed the sweet juicy goodness and the satisfaction of harvesting***



## 5.0 What we learnt

### A summary of barriers ...and opportunities

Overall the park is **well resourced and valued** as a place for play, football, skating and exercise. The park is valued as **a place to experience nature** and this was **a key element of many of the memories** that people shared.

However, there are a number of regularly referred to barriers that make **some people think twice before deciding against coming to the park.**

“I come for scooter play – but there’s often lots of broken glass”

“We live nearby but don’t come here because of the teenagers. Instead we drive to other parks”

Perhaps most significantly the death of a local woman, found in the park, a few years ago is well known in the community. This created a **stigma** local people are working hard to overcome.

The neighbourhood is still not without its troubles and as recently as late 2022 the council consulted nearby stakeholders on proposals to site a knife amnesty box in the park. There is a risk that this creates very negative associations for people about the park and makes people feel afraid in a place where children should feel safe to play.

There were a number of references to vandalism and a sense that because there is **little locally for teenagers to do**, they are sometimes perceived to dominate the space. The shelter seems to be a focus of this and council representatives have reported vandalism here.



**A relatively simple modification** to remove the side wall from the shelter may reduce both the potential for vandalism and a perceived fear that it’s somewhere people go to get up to no good. The principle of passive surveillance (crime being reduced in spaces that are clearly visible) is well documented in practices of Secure by Design and urban psychology.

In a more positive light - many people associate the park with their journeys to local **community hubs** like the nursery, library and local churches. These organisations would make ideal partners for future programmes of co-production.

## 6.0 The Strategic Vision *in 2 strands:*

### 6.1 Programme(s) of Co-Creation

Fundamental to the approach proposed is the notion that ***participation in creative processes can have great significance*** for someone, over and above the experience of seeing a piece of art. There is the potential to nurture confidence and skills, provide a sense of belonging and something to do. These processes can be transformative, for individuals and in turn, communities & places.

It is suggested that a public art strategy for Lyngford Park be rooted in programmes of co-creation where the focus is on getting the process right for those who might collaborate, rather than a piece of art as an end product.

For impact to be maximised it is recommended that programmes should be long-term (ideally perhaps 2-3 year but certainly over many months) in order that meaningful relationships might have the chance to be established and sustained.

There is further potential for intergenerational initiatives to foster personal connections across local communities as well as within. In the events of this summer one person talked about wanting to be able to help others when in the park.

Open invitations to residents are one way to switch the power balance within the creative process. This can involve asking for ideas but might, more meaningfully, be to provide budgets to fund some of the ideas put forward, in a managed and supported way.



images from former projects by report author, artist George Lovesmith. Bretton Greens, Northampton and Playing Out Redcliffe, Bristol



The creation of training and mentoring opportunities should be considered and may have deep significance for those who take them up; and where there are support roles that need to be filled, prioritising committed participants for any such paid employment can help root initiatives within communities.

Working relationships need to be cultivated with (rather than attempting to work for) those with marginalised voices who may perceive barriers to them using the park. This is expanded on very relevantly in the article “How to Build Public Spaces for Teen Girls” on the website [Women in Urbanism](#) which recommends “creating meaningful experiences which give girls a voice and power to occupy and take over spaces in their city.”

For such ambitious, deep rooted engagement, there is also a need for associated budgets for co-professionals to develop engagement in parallel. These may include youth workers (e.g. to more successfully work with teenagers who may have other health and emotional needs that won't best be addressed by a commissioned artist) or child-carers (e.g. to enable parents to meaningfully engage over a sustained period). In 2022 it was acknowledged that there had been under investment in youth services in Taunton and a concern remains that this might continue to be the case.



image & community invitation from former projects by report author, artist George Lovesmith. Red Brick Field, Plymouth and Playing Out Lawrence Hill, Bristol

## 6.2 The Strategic Vision *in 2 strands:*

### Playable Infrastructure

Recurring themes in the engagement events in Lyngford Park were around park interventions that could enable:

- a greater variety of uses (sitting, chatting, playing, learning, dreaming...)
- experiences of nature
- opportunities to experience the arts outside
- a sense of ownership or belonging
- children's own interpretation of how to use or play with things

The notion of playable infrastructure centres around the childlike impulse to play with everything. Anything can be interpreted, or indeed designed, to perform more than one function.

Some simple suggestions that could form the foundation of a co-creation brief could include:

- Interpretations of the Landscape  
Infrastructure, Structures or Sculptures could frame views, or create new access where previously there was none (e.g. to the water's edge or the tree canopy).



images from former projects by report author,  
artist George Lovesmith. The Living Lookout,  
Saltram National Trust Estate, Plymouth  
& The Retreat, Pegasus School, Bristol

Strategic Public Art Vision for LYNGFORD PARK, TAUNTON  
George Lovesmith for & on behalf of  
SOMERSET ART WORKS in partnership with North Taunton One Team

images from former projects by report author, artist George Lovesmith. Symbol of Hope, Oxfordshire; The Recycled Playground, Sheffield; Ebenezer Gate, Bristol; Amfi, Norway, Symbol of Hope, Oxfordshire & Red brick Field, Plymouth.



#### -Story Circles

A ring of seats or logs, that might better enable outdoor storytelling and performances, but would also promote and give the library a physical stake in the park... Of course they could also be jumped around or exercised on too.

#### -Structured Fruit Tree Planting

Trees and bushes can be laid out to define a route or the framework for a game. Fruit trees and bushes present opportunities for resident involvement and a harvestable community resource, that people expressed a desire for (along with foraging information), especially where trees are felled. Tree planting is also a positive response to the climate crisis, sequestering carbon and providing new wildlife habitats which people were keen to encourage.

#### -Opportunities for Expression

Surfaces that can be chalked upon, woven through or played like a musical instrument could enrich any interventions in the park and create unique vehicles for the arts outdoors. Over the course of the events people suggested a keenness for making dens and 'building stuff'



## 7.0 Identified collaborators & partnership opportunities

Key to the strategy proposed is to work invite others into the space of creative co-production.

The neighbourhood is rich with potential collaborative partners.

On the fringes of the park are:

- Hillside Family Centre
- Brook Green Nursery
- Priorswood Library  
&  
-Priorswood Community Centre

People mentioned local churches:

- St Teresa's  
&  
-St Peter's

Much of the exploratory work focussed on nature:

- Somerset Wildlife Trust

& there are a number of local schools, many of which Somerset Art Works have established relationships with:

- Lyngford Park Primary School (adjacent Stoney Furlong Field)
- Priorswood Primary School (adjacent Wedlands Open Space)
- Wellsprings Primary School (adjacent Taunton Green)
- Nerrols Primary School (between Warres Road and The Shoulders)
- Selworthy School (SEN School with Primary Provision on Oakhill Campus & Secondary & Sixth Form on Hazelbrook Campus)
- Sky Academy (SEN School)
- Taunton Academy (Secondary School in the north of Priorswood)

## 8.0 Somerset Art Works & North Taunton One Team

### Somerset Art Works

Somerset Art Works (SAW) is a registered charity, formally constituted in 2000 to develop the visual arts across Somerset for the benefit of all. We initiate a wide range of projects in a variety of settings, working in partnership with other arts and non-arts organisations. An Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation since 2018, SAW is committed to developing partnerships within environment, heritage and health sectors to reach wider communities and areas with low arts engagement. We work to support our communities to take part in local, national & international art and regeneration initiatives. We have been working with North Taunton communities since 2014.

[somerstartworks.org.uk](http://somerstartworks.org.uk)

### North Taunton One Team

One Teams have been working in Somerset since 2013. They are designed to bring a multi-agency focus to support areas identified in the National Indices of Multiple Deprivation. Teams meet regularly to consider local concerns and co-ordinate partnership working to provide sustainable solutions for individuals, families and communities. They include members of local authorities, social housing landlords, the Neighbourhood Policing Team, schools and mental health services, and have links with services such as the Safeguarding & Co-ordination Unit, and Adults & Children's Social Care.

